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The Path of Serenity and Insight: An Explanation of the Buddhist Jhānas by Henepola Gunaratana

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scholars whose attention is drawn to Tibet by recent events. It is a unique description of the now lost religious-political structure of the Tibetan way of life prior to the take-over by the People's Republic of China in 1949.

The book is useful not only for its detailed information about the selection and training of incarnate buddhas (Norbu as well as the Dalai Lama) in monastic life, but also for the ingenuous first-hand account of the stages of political events which led to the Dalai Lama's exile in 1959.

A postscript chapter updates Norbu's activities on behalf of his country's culture and independence since the 1961 edition.

R. S.

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*The Science of Meditation.* By ROHIT MEHTA. Delhi: MOTILAL BANARSIDASS, 1978; reprint, 1981. Pp. iv + 199. Rs 60 (cloth); Rs 35 (paper).

At best this is a collection of sermons on yogic forms of meditation, but it is not about science and meditation. What references there are to scientific research on the brain or contemporary psychology are minimal in substance. Nor can this book be used by anyone wishing to make authentically documented statements on yoga. Rather, this is a gentle book that may entice some to do further study or may awaken others to certain suggestions for understanding yoga, especially in its *Kundalinī* form, in contemporary psychological terms. While it is true that definitive studies do not exist except within narrowly defined limits, and these may be found in parapsychological journals, this is not the book to use in the meantime. There are better introductions (Varenne, Eliade, or Feuerstein). This book suffers from generalities, undocumented references, and an uncritical use and conflation of sources.

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*The Path of Serenity and Insight: An Explanation of the Buddhist Jhānas.* By HENEPOLA GUNARATANA. Delhi: MOTILAL BANARSIDASS, 1985. Pp. xiv + 263. Rs 125.

Ven. Dr. Gunaratana, like Ven. Dr. Saddhātissa (see *JAOS* 108.2 [1988]: 329), is a Buddhist monk who has spent the last several decades as a leader of Theravāda Buddhism in the West, after missionary work in South Asia. A lecturer and meditation teacher, he has composed a clear well-written account on the subject of the *jhānas* (Skt. *dhyāna*), the levels

of attainment which appear in the course of meditation leading to liberation.

While his style is analytical and somewhat repetitive, in the true tradition of Abhidhamma, his coverage of the subject is quite comprehensive and well documented with references to Nikāya, Abhidhamma and the commentarial literature, in particular the *Visuddhimagga*.

Besides elaborating the factors involved in the material and immaterial (*ārappa*) *jhānas*, their relation to super-normal attainments (*abhiññā*), etc., Dr. Gunaratana distinguishes between mundane and supermundane (*lokuttara*) *jhānas*, the latter being differentiated by specifically taking *nibbāna* as its object, rather than an idea or image. The relation between arahatship and the value of attaining various *jhānas* and *abhiññās* is also considered. Included is a glossary of terms, several appendices and a fairly good bibliography of the primary literature of Theravāda Buddhism.

This should be a useful book for those interested in a well-documented, traditional analysis of the constituents of Theravāda Buddhist meditation.

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*Religion, Nationalism, and the State in Modern Sri Lanka.* By K. M. DE SILVA. USF Monographs in Religion and Public Policy. Tampa: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA, 1986. Pp. 47.

The noted Sri Lankan historian, K. M. de Silva, discusses in this brief work two topics on which he has often written. First, he surveys the difficult relationship between Buddhist institutions and the colonial governments of Sri Lanka. Second, he considers the role of religion in the communal chauvinism that has developed in independent Sri Lanka.

The origin of this work as conference presentations may explain a lack of continuity in de Silva's arguments. Moreover, the contents of this publication can be found in de Silva's more substantial writings; a large portion of the last two "chapters" is taken word for word from de Silva's *Managing Ethnic Tensions in Multi-Ethnic Societies: Sri Lanka 1880-1985* (Lanham, Md., 1986). The brevity of presentation here may make it nearly impossible for those unfamiliar with the political history of modern Sri Lanka even to recognize the distinctiveness of his position. For example, de Silva's interpretation of Sri Lanka as "a multi-ethnic society" is assumed without introduction. To evaluate this important—and in de Silva's use, very normative—idea, readers will have to turn to the above-mentioned work and de Silva's *A History of Sri Lanka* (Berkeley, 1981).